

24 April 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officer for Narcotics  
FROM: Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT: National Drug Enforcement Policy Board Meeting,  
24 April 1985

1. There is to be a working group of the Drug Enforcement Policy Board which will meet every month or so, with a board meeting every three months or so. You are to represent me on the working group at the first meeting in 30-45 days, exact date to be determined. Every member is to present a narcotics threat assessment and a rundown on the resources committed to various functions and relationships in the narcotics target.

25X1

3. I attach two pieces of paper the Attorney General handed out at the meeting, one calling for recommendations of the working group on new policy, and legislation to address the designer drug problem.

William J. Casey

Attachments

25X1

SECRET

NATIONAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT POLICY BOARD

Issue:     Statistics on Federal Drug Seizures

Discussion:

Efforts by the Federal Government to measure the effectiveness of its drug enforcement program have been severely hampered by the lack of centrally gathered statistics on Federal drug seizures. Historically, each agency involved in drug seizures has kept its own figures. This suits the needs of the agencies to record their individual accomplishments, but it has resulted in substantial overlapping of data among agencies.

A hundred tons of marijuana, for example, seized by the Coast Guard with the assistance of the U.S. Customs Service and the Drug Enforcement Administration, are often logged on each agency's books for the full amount: each system shows a hundred-ton seizure in its database.

As a result, efforts to total the seizures recorded by all Federal agencies have produced figures that reflect double- or triple-counting in many cases. Without a data collection system that will prevent such errors, the Federal Government is unable to gather reliable statistics for the total amount of drugs it seizes.

Proposal:

Because this is an interagency issue that affects the ability of the Federal Government to assess the effectiveness of its drug enforcement efforts, accounting for drug seizures would be an appropriate problem for the National Drug Enforcement Policy Board to examine and resolve. The focus would be on developing a system that would compile Federal drug seizure data in a manner that is both reliable and cost effective.

NATIONAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT POLICY BOARD

Issue: Designer Drugs

Discussion:

The term "designer drugs" refers to new substances that are chemically similar to drugs already subject to the Controlled Substances Act. By making slight chemical alterations, a producer can create new drugs that have the effect of controlled substances, but are not in violation of the Act.

The new compounds can be developed and marketed very quickly, and as soon as they are identified by the Government and put under emergency scheduling controls, the clandestine laboratories could simply introduce another modification to circumvent the law. If this cycle should occur, law enforcement would always be one step behind the producers, and the toll on public health would escalate as the supply of unscheduled drugs increased.

The profit incentive for the production of designer drugs is exceptionally strong: it has been estimated that a small, reasonably well-equipped lab, with college-trained chemists, can produce \$2 million worth of synthetic heroin on a \$500 investment in chemicals. It would be reasonable to expect such a lucrative enterprise to attract an increasing number of producers, particularly if they are not subject to the penalties of the Controlled Substances Act.

The ease with which labs can produce large quantities of designer drugs means that increasing amounts of substitutes for controlled substances may arrive in the marketplace. Reportedly, a single chemist working full-time could produce enough synthetic heroin to keep the entire country's addicts supplied indefinitely. Some heroin substitutes widely available on the West Coast are hundreds of times more powerful than morphine, and serious neurological damage and even death have resulted from their use.

Given their availability, potency, and ambiguous legal status, designer drugs could easily become the drug of choice for many users. This has caught the interest of the media and the Congress, and bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate that would require the Policy Board to assess the problem and submit recommendations to Congress.

Proposal:

In view of the urgency of the designer drug problem and the need for new policy and legislation to address it, the Policy Board should adopt this as an issue and request the recommendations of the Working Group.